

The Village Setting

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donkey. Now we¹ can get the Athens newspapers on the same day they are published, whereas before they would always be at least two days late and frequently more. We have no illiterates here, so many subscribe to these papers.

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Considerable insight into what living on a good road means was gained from talking with mountain people who had been resettled in the lowlands away from their destroyed villages. One woman mentioned the advantages with little hesitation, beginning with the access to medical treatment mentioned above: "Here medical care is available because of the road. If a child gets appendicitis, he can get to a doctor in time; in our village up above he would have died. Also woman's work is lighter here. The children are better off. They can go to the school right here in the village whereas in our location up above they had to walk from two to three hours every day."

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A commandant of police brought out some interesting examples of what a road means to a village by comparing his community, which got a road ten years before, with another community not far away which was not yet on a road:

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The road brought many economic changes. For instance, my father had three hundred cherry trees which he had never bothered to fence in, prune, or tend in any way. Anybody could come and eat the fruit; they would break the branches. But when the road was built, my father fenced in the land and sold the cherries. The income began coming in. Also, it was a disgrace in our village to sell a chicken, but when the road came the women began to sell both eggs and chickens. This meant more income. Eggs in the village without a road sell for half the price obtained by the women in my village. This holds true for all products.

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In the village without a road you would have a hard time finding a man with enough cash to buy a candle to light in church, while in my village people always seem to have some cash. In the other village each farmer needs a donkey for transportation and will spend about two thousand drachmas a year just for the upkeep of the donkey; in our village we do not need donkeys because we can use the trucks at much less expense.

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Politically, too, roads make a difference. The candidates for parliament seldom get to the villages off the road but try to visit the rest; the same holds true for government officials in position to help in agriculture or other ways. They stick pretty much to the villages which they can easily reach.

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The roads that lead into and out of the plateia do more than bring in the welcome buses, trucks, and occasional private cars; they bring in new services, new ideas, better teachers, and increased economic opportunities. People begin to feel that their village has moved from the shadow of isolation into the Greek sunlight.

¹ [i.e., the village of Tsepelovo - Analyst.]

The Changing Life of the Shepherd

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will buy to put on his lead ram. Then he will pick another deep bell for his eldest ewe, but will always test it against the deepest bell for what seems to be harmony to his ear. As he buys the smaller bells with the higher sounds, he always compares each with the deepest bell. In a flock of about 200, he may have as many as 60 to 70 carefully tested bells. The sound of a flock grazing or in movement is always pleasing even to the casual passerby. But to the shepherd it is the sweetest music of all, for it is as though his own private orchestra were playing for him, telling him by each little sound much about the behavior of his flock. If one note is missing for very long, he becomes aware of it and investigates to see what is wrong. When all are ringing together, he feels his little universe is safe.

As I walked through the village, I tried to picture it in the cold and empty winter. Obviously, the people from Valtetsi scatter out quite widely once they get below. What kind of community can they maintain with such a migration pattern? The shepherd's answers to queries about organizational life gave a rough sketch of the Valtetsi community.

Like other villages, they have the village council. The president of the council, who happens to run a coffeehouse, must stay in the village throughout the year. He can, on occasion, get a two-week leave from the prefect in Tripolis.

"Suppose he owned livestock," I asked, "and had to take them to winter pastures below. What would he do?"

"Other members of his family would have to take care of the animals for him and he would remain here."

Local elections are postponed from winter until the return of most of the people in the spring. But for national elections the men leave the flocks with their womenfolk and older children and walk all the way back up to the village to cast their ballots.

Valtetsi also has its school board, church board, and a livestock cooperative that helps its members get some credit from the Agricultural Bank, with their flocks as collateral (it serves no marketing function). Yet the migration pattern affects even these organizations, for at the time of my visit the cooperative president had not yet returned from his winter's sojourn on the plain nor had all of the board members for the church or the school.

In spite of the periodic absence of its inhabitants, the loyalty to Valtetsi is strong. Not the least of village distinctions was the Battle of Valtetsi, in which local people claim that in 1821 the first victorious army of Greeks under Kolokotrones rose up against the Turks. Since the soldiers believed that the Virgin had aided that victory, taking part just as Hera and Athena did with their forces deployed in the Trojan War, a special church to the Virgin was built in the village in 1837. One of the most heinous

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Family

594 does not hurt the dignity of the wife to be turned down, whereas it would
184 make the man lose face.

593 Those familiar with village family life point out that wife beating is al-
594 most a thing of the past because women are learning that this is not the gen-
[178] eral rule and need not be endured. When I asked groups of young men
whom I interviewed whether they thought they would ever beat their wives,
one man said, "I probably will if I get drunk." Several said that they would
beat her if she was not good, but they had a hard time defining what they
meant by being "good." Another young man pointed out, "If my wife does
not behave, I will make suggestions. If she doesn't change her ways, then
I'll beat her." Beating, then, is no pastime but a last resort for keeping a

[586] wife in line. From time to time, a village woman may threaten to sue for
divorce, but this is generally interpreted in the village as a desire on her
part "to be fashionable" rather than as a way out of a bad bargain. Divorces
are still under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts and are very difficult
to obtain. The growing legal rights of women as well as the social changes
[562] under way are making the woman, as well as her husband, think of herself
[178] as a human being and not as property to be owned and ordered about. This
[369] holds true in the villages as well as in the cities.

562 In 1952 the women were first given the right to vote in national elections,
641 but they are rarely elected to an office and seldom make their way into
666 governmental positions traditionally held by men. Village men generally
agree that it is proper for women to have the vote but maintain that their
women are not sufficiently educated to use the ballot wisely. In Attica a
villager said that the women of his village were not yet "ripe" enough to be
members of the local council, but then he added: "But we men just don't
like the idea — that's nearer the truth." This lack of "ripeness" was inter-
esting in view of the fact that in 1930 women won the right to vote in mu-
nicipal elections if they could read and write and were over thirty years of
age. In 1949 this was changed to allow any woman twenty-one years of age
to vote, even if illiterate, in municipal elections.⁹

562 Nevertheless, any peasant woman who wants to get along with her hus-
641 band had best concern herself with her household duties and assist in the
593 farm tasks as best she can. Very much preoccupation with "women's rights"
[626] would tend to make her a spectacle in the village, thereby subjecting her
[623] husband to much teasing by the other men. If there is a public meeting,
[177] she is not supposed to attend, although she may stand with other women
on the edge of the square to see the notables arrive and to watch proceed-
ings from a distance. Americans connected with the United States Mission
to Greece have adopted the tactic of trying to draw the women into more
active participation in these public meetings and have been fairly successful
in some of the villages where they have worked most intensively.

562 The patterns of deference required of women and their so-called rights
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Local Government

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154 If the Greek villager did not have a government to curse, he would be in a bad way indeed. Somewhere he has to find a scapegoat for the hard life that he leads. He could berate his wife or beat his children, but that would give only limited relief, since he knows they are not responsible for his difficulties; he could raise his clenched fist to the heavens and curse the Almighty, and he does this in some of the most colorful language known to man, but that too has its possible dangers, since the Almighty in a less genial mood might give him his comeuppance. What better object for his scorn could he find than the government, which is always wanting taxes, takes him off to military service, asks him innumerable questions every time he seeks a loan, and stages a periodic election prior to which "lying" politicians come to seek his vote.

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619 At the same time, the peasant is shrewd enough to distinguish between Greece as a nation, to which he can be tremendously loyal should anyone cast aspersions upon it, and whatever national government is in power. He also draws a distinction between the local government of his village and the central government in Athens, with his views of the former going up and down, but his regard for the latter seldom going up. There is no mercurial quality, therefore, to peasant politics. If the peasant does shift his

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vote, it is in sullen protest and not because of any wildly enthusiastic support for some new leaders seeking the reins of government. He does not think of government in abstract terms; he feels more comfortable talking about specific persons and events. He will know, for instance, that his country is a monarchy and that King Paul and Queen Frederika visited his village last year and drank coffee with the community president and that the queen went into one of his neighbor's homes to see how the housewife was weaving a particular pattern; he will know that there is such a thing as a national parliament, for his wife's second cousin, a representative there, regales them on occasional visits with all the smart things he does when he is in Athens.

Or, as happened in Phokia, a coastal village between Athens and Sou-nion, the community president interrupted our conversation on a cool September evening (in 1959) to show us pictures taken of himself with the shipping magnate, Onassis, and the Greek premier, Konstandinos Kara-manlis. The former had anchored his luxury yacht off the shore near Phokia a few months previously and had invited the premier to come to Phokia, from which a small launch would take him out to the yacht for dinner. True to tradition, these personages received the greetings of the community president, posed for their photographs with him in a village taverna, and listened to his requests for funds to extend the village dock out to deeper water.

I often wondered whether the Greek villager was as interested in politics as the Athenian thought that he was, for I found many villagers almost totally ignorant of governmental affairs, a fact which could be duplicated among the least educated in almost every country. Indeed, many people who knew village life well said that the peasants were much more interested in talking about agriculture than national politics.

GREEK TRADITIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The strongest governmental tradition in rural Greece is that of government by elders, who represent the accumulated wisdom and authority of the village. One would expect this in a family-centered society, but, in the case of Greece, it has been further reinforced by historical developments.

These influences are primarily Byzantine in character. True enough, one can go back to the city-state, or *polis*, of the ancient Greeks and show how even the settlements outside the fortified town, which were a part of the polis, had their representatives on its central council and played their part in raising military and financial levies in case of war; or one can trace the decline of the polis under Macedonian and Roman rule between 350 B.C. and 330 A.D. and assume that many of its earlier functions must have persisted. But it is not until the flowering of Byzantium that a transformation of local government took place. As Harold F. Alderfer has stated:

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toration, but most of the job had been done by "personal work" (*prosopike ergassia*). This is an old, old practice whereby the community council assigns the families or adults of the village so many days of "voluntary" labor on a task that needs to be carried out in the community interest. In general, a community may call for ten days of work (or pay in lieu thereof) from each able-bodied villager, although it need not do this if there are no projects requiring this much labor. 623
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"Everybody who could," according to the president, "went to the quarries and cut limestone; others cut wood. We paid laborers to construct the lime kiln and then produced our own lime at a saving of twenty million drachmas [over \$1300 then]. While the construction crews were building the new road through here, we brought the stones they unearthed to the church site and, with the help of good masons, put up the structure." Here again local government was getting something done. [316]
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On another trip in 1955, returning from a visit to Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain on a peninsula in Northern Greece, I saw a notice nailed to a plane tree near the main fountain of the village. It looked official, so we went up to have a look. It announced the auctioning off of the right to collect a certain kind of tax: 651
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*Announcement of Bidding for the Lease of Farming
of Animal Sale Tax for Fiscal Year 1955-56*

The President of the community of Neochori declares that . . . a bidding is announced for Sunday 17 June between 10-12 A.M. in the Community Building for the highest offer to lease the farming of taxes on animal sales during fiscal year 1955-56.

The amount of 3000 drachmas [\$100] has been determined as the first offer and the amount of 300 drachmas as a guarantee to be deposited by any participant. The tax has been determined at two percent on any sale of animals. Citizens having debts in the community are not accepted. The amount of lease shall be paid in four equal installments, the last to be paid on 31 March 1956. All expenses will be charged to the lessor.

Here the local authorities were following the ancient practice of "farming" out the taxes to the highest bidder who, in turn, was expected to derive from rigorous collection much more than he paid for the right. Every time a bleating goat or an ox changed masters, the successful bidder would collect his 2 percent of the sale price.

The community council has other duties in addition to managing a community-owned radio, rebuilding churches, and collecting taxes. It conducts local elections as well.* By 1951 the political situation had stabilized to the point that local elections could be held throughout the country. Of the registered voters, a greater proportion of women than men voted, thereby showing their appreciation of the right of suffrage. From nine to thirty-one 623
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Community

[666] councilmen could be elected in demes and from five to fifteen in communes,
[633] on the basis of population.

An account of local officialdom taken from almost any commune in Greece closely resembles that from other communes, although the number of council members may vary. Here are the facts for Gourie, near Mesolongi on the western coast of Greece.

[622] The village has the following officers: a president and a deputy president, who replaces the former in his absence. The president is the paid governmental representative in the village. The secretary is a salaried, permanent employee of the community, whose duty is to keep all community records, conduct all correspondence, and do all other clerical work. The village council: it is the duty of this council to help the president solve the various community problems, to attend regular meetings and take the necessary resolutions. The councilmen

[624] are unpaid officers; the president is paid a yearly allowance of one thousand drachmas for his extra expenses. The council and the president were elected during the last national municipal elections. Later the president was elected by the councilmen.

623 The old school building is now used for the community office. This has two rooms; one is used for the president's office and the other for the secretary's; its furniture is very poor; it has six chairs, a divan, and a bookcase used for filing.
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Of course, villages differ in the facilities provided for the community-council officers. In Tsapelovo, an Epirus village, the office of the council was well furnished. Cushioned benches lined the walls. Other furniture included a long table at which the secretary worked; a storage chest; a glassed, built-in cabinet containing shelves for filing; four straight-back wicker chairs; and another cabinet built into the wall which contained a store of medical supplies. The room was decorated with an *Ohi* sign, commemorating the refusal by Metaxas to capitulate to the Italians early in World War II, pictures of the royal family, portraits of local dignitaries, and two pictures of Eisenhower. Some American Mission material lay on the long table. This council, too, had the responsibility of taking care of the high-powered American Mission radio, similar to the one in Phrangista.

[353] As I talked with the village officials here and throughout Greece, I tried to understand their conceptions of their jobs. I knew what the law stated to be their functions but wondered how closely their own ideas corresponded with the legal description. In an Attica village (1953) I found a council consisting of eight members and the president. The secretary there, as elsewhere, had no vote at council meetings, but introduced the topics on the agenda. I asked this secretary whether he considered himself an employee of the community council or of the central government. In Communist countries to the north I had known that the secretary of local government was usually a trusted Communist imposed on the community and

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and receive fewer material rewards than to be dealt with impersonally and receive more material goods. Efficiency, then, whether in administration or in farm work, is something he does not initially value; he must be taught to value it if it is to assume any importance in his life.

As many observers have pointed out, the Greek — be he peasant or city dweller — is not loyal to an abstract political principle, nor is he loyal to a political organization as such.¹⁸ He is loyal to a political leader but only so long as following that leader does not mean that he must become disloyal to himself and go against his own cherished opinions of what ought to be done. Therefore, he can switch from one political leader to another without any sense of betrayal and sees no inconsistency in contradictory political behavior because he does not behave by the principles by which contradictions are gauged. Each situation is a separate case to be judged by itself and precedents have little relevance.

The peasant, sitting in his smoke-filled coffeehouse, is interested in hearing what others say about politics in Athens, not because he feels very closely identified with one party or the other, but because he tries to figure out what the meaning of each event is for his own particular existence. Few villagers are truly partisan in their political allegiance, which explains why it is almost impossible to maintain even a semblance of a party organization in a village. The parties do not even try. When elections are coming up, the candidates know the names of local people who have been sympathetic in the past and, through their help, try to work up a little political rally at which they can state why they should be supported for office. Around election time I chanced to be in several villages when these candidates made their appearance. On the whole, they drew small crowds, and even those who had decided to vote for them did not bother to go take a look at their chosen man. If this office seeker is to be "used" later on, one would think that here would be an excellent opportunity for the villager to establish the personal contact he might later exploit. But the peasant does not think this far ahead and, furthermore, probably assumes that the need for the politician's help might not arise.

When I listened to the peasants criticize their politicians, even those for whom they had voted and still supported, I realized that a foreigner might be tempted to read too much disapproval in comments which were made primarily to build up the ego of the critic. For, when I turned to such a critic after he had devastatingly, in his opinion, torn some program or political position to shreds, and asked "what do you suggest that the political leaders do instead?", the only reply given was: "I don't know because I'm not a politician."

I was also interested to note that there was relatively little disruptive political factionalism in a Greek village. Forty percent of the people may tend to support one party or leader, and they are not apt to switch to back

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665 the rival party the other sixty percent support. However, should occasion
578 seem opportune, a great number of them might switch to the support of a
● 666 third party simply as a means of expressing disapproval of the performance
of the ones they have been supporting. But let the men of a village find
some common denominator, such as the erection of a school or a church
building, and they will forget their political differences.

829 In conclusion, the best way to characterize "the peasant and politics" is
66 in terms of indifference. This is especially true if one looks on politics as
369 an organized way of bringing certain measures to pass through the election
of officials committed to carrying them out. This has never worked for the
Greek peasant in the past, and he is dubious about its merits in the future.
If one means by politics the utilization of personal and family contacts
with politicians and officials to get some gain for oneself, then the peasant
can understand its significance and see its value. For, after all, politics and
politicians are associated with the city and especially with Athens. Villagers
are caught up in the backwash and, in their view of the world, have little
importance as active agents. Political phenomena, like the weather, have
to be endured, although now and then some useful protection from each
might be sought in personal initiative, but not by group effort.

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Change

178 what they see that other communities have. Nothing is more irksome to
[628] those in one village than to be refused electricity from a power line passing close by when the current is made available to other villages in the region.

Most of the time, unplanned social change takes place as a response by villagers to forces from outside the village which impinge on their way of life. The response may be one of solid resistance to certain types of innovation, even though some individuals are for the change but unwilling to take the necessary social risk of advocating it. At other times, a selective change occurs when villagers choose some new items while rejecting others.

178 They may welcome a new opportunity to send their sons away for more edu-
562 cation, but demur at letting their daughters pursue a similar advantage.

• 666 Now and then, the villagers may accept a new practice and give it a local
[626] twist not contemplated when the practice originated elsewhere. Women, for instance, have been given the right to vote, but how they exercise this prerogative depends much on local village opinion and the authority of the male family heads. Women who vote just as their husbands tell them to vote, a phenomenon common in many countries other than Greece, are not following the independence of thought and the privacy of ballot which supposedly accompanies the free citizen. But they do vote, which testifies to the fact that an innovation of radical proportions has been accepted.

178 This interaction between outside forces and the willingness or reluctance
185 of local people to change are best brought into focus in the consideration
727 of planned programs of change, which are confronting the villager on every hand.

PLANNED CHANGE

Immediately after the end of the guerrilla war, programs of welfare and reconstruction were energetically initiated in rural areas which had suffered most. These were designed to help the villagers rebuild their houses and schools, replace draft animals or depleted flocks, obtain implements and seed. Food staples were also provided where needed. The orphans or otherwise dependent children were brought into special child villages, set up by the Queen's Fund for care and education, until old enough to go out on their own. But these measures, planned chiefly for rehabilitation, also carried with them implications for change. In doing so, they were following a trail previously blazed.

177 Americans past middle age, who contributed to the Near East Relief at
178 the end of World War I, may or may not know that the funds donated so generously at that time were being put to good use long after the immediate relief needs had been met. Its successor, the Near East Foundation, chose Greece as one of its main arenas of operation. The attempts at rural reconstruction, or village improvement, by this organization in cooperation with the Greek government in the 1930s have been fully described by the educa-

The Village: As a Community

The Village Government

621 IN THE FIRST CHAPTER the village was described as a setting for the life of families, which are the most significant social groups in the settlement. It now becomes possible to consider the functions of the village itself as an entity in its own right. First, the formal organization of village-wide activities and responsibilities will be discussed, and second, the attitudes of the inhabitants toward Vasilika in contrast with their attitudes toward the family and the nation.

[631] The Greek government classifies Vasilika as a *kinotis* for administrative purposes despite its small population. A *kinotis* is legally a populated center with at least 300 inhabitants and a school, and constitutes one of the four kinds of administrative subdivisions in each of the *nomes* (provinces) of Greece.

622 The formal governmental activities of the *kinotis* are the responsibility of
623 a locally elected president and council. A community the size of Vasilika is
665 entitled to a council of five members elected for a four-year term. Voting must
666 be done along party lines; and voters select five names from among those listed
by the party of their choice. Vasilika had only two political parties in its local
elections in 1956. Under the system of proportional representation then operating,
the four men with the most votes from the party which itself had the majority of
votes were elected to the council. The fifth member should have been the man with
the most votes in the minority party. At the last Vasilika election, however, the
man in this position preferred not to act as a minority representative and the
second man on the list became the council member. The five representatives then
elect a president and a vice-president from among their number, usually for
two-year terms. The council and community are served by an additional official,
the secretary of the *kinotis*. The secretary is not elected and has no
[634] vote on the council. He is appointed by the nomarch (governor) of the province
upon nomination from the village council. His salary varies with the income of

[Public Life in 1947]

COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

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support for the Greek government was about to be withdrawn, 665
and it was not yet clear that American support would be forth- 669
coming to replace the British. Under the circumstances it is not 648
strange that the Communists went from strength to strength, 727
while their opponents were filled with foreboding for the future.

To be sure, the Communists faced one great obstacle. Their 669
opponents were still in full control of the administrative machine 647
of government. The pattern so successfully followed in eastern
European countries which fell within the Russian sphere of in-
fluence, whereby Communists first acquired a toehold in the
administration and then used their position to push all rivals
out, could scarcely be employed in Greece. The police, army
and civil bureaucracy were all firmly in anti-Communist hands.
British armed intervention in 1944 had been necessary to secure [648]
this state of affairs, but it was confirmed by elections held in [666].
1946; and the new aggressiveness of international Communist
policies did not permit patient waiting until some future elec-
tion might lead to a coalition including Communist ministers.

Yet the effectiveness of these instruments of power was sadly
blunted in Greece. In the countryside the police were too few
to resist concerted attack by guerrilla bands. The army was
numerous enough, but the morale of the soldiers made offensive
actions against the guerrillas difficult and largely ineffective.
The civil bureaucracy was distinguished by its clumsiness and 647
occasional corruption. Efforts to prevent corruption led to ex- 661
cessive centralization, so that even simple decisions had con-
stantly to be referred to Athens, and not infrequently to a cabi-
net member, before action could be taken. The nomarchs, [634]
the principal local officials in the provinces, characteristically
spent more time in Athens, haunting the central offices of the
government in hope of getting needed decisions, money or sup-
plies, than they did in the districts assigned to them. Inciden-
tally, of course, they could thereby consolidate personal rela-

THE VILLAGES

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communities) were governed by appointees of the Ministry of Interior. This sometimes led to disharmony and distrust between the inhabitants and their legal representatives. In 1951, however, elections were organized in villages (and larger communities), so that for the first time since the war the people had a chance to choose their own local officials. Villagers elect members of the village council, which varies in size with the size of the community. The council members then choose one of their number as president and another as secretary.

The secretary's duty is to keep village records; but the main responsibilities rest upon the president. He represents the village in all dealings with the outer world, and has an informal authority to hear complaints and settle quarrels within the village. Legal cases, however, lie beyond his competence; they are dealt with by regular judges, appointed by the Ministry of Justice.

A second center of village leadership is the church. Every village has a church, and the priest is often a native of the village, distinguished from his fellows by a special garb and the fact that he has attended a seminary for a year or longer. Priests are appointed by bishops, but a congregation has the right to refuse a nomination, or to object to a priest it dislikes. In such cases the bishop normally attempts to find someone else to suit the wishes of the community.

A third focus of leadership is the school system. Nearly every village has a primary school, staffed by a teacher who has had at least a secondary school education. Unlike the priest or the president, he is most often a stranger to the community, appointed to his post by the Ministry of Education. Here, in many villages, lies an important point of contact with the outside world; but just because the schoolmaster is usually an outsider and often a city man, he fails to command in most villages quite the same trust and authority that the priest and president enjoy.

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957

EH1 Greece EH1
Cherasia

[Hill Villages]

THE VILLAGES

worth, however, the records showed 45 births since 1951 as
against 18 deaths, and everything I heard and observed in the
village pointed to a very high rate of natural increase.

Marriages occur early. When nearly everyone lacks land that
is worth much of anything, there is no tendency to wait until
the new family can be assured a landed inheritance. One young
man said, somewhat cynically: "What I had when I married
was a donkey, an axe and a strong back. I still have all three,
and three children as well." The donkey, I gathered, was his
wife's contribution to the new household; the axe and the back,
his own. This, it seems, is more or less normal in the village;
and one can easily understand how a desire to escape the nag-
ging poverty of the parental household would lead young men
and girls into early marriage, in order at least to enjoy personal
independence and the satisfactions of the marriage bed. Even
though the rest of their traditional style of life seems on the
verge of ruin, this still is possible. Feeling a general despair of
ever being able to live decently, feeling also a certain reckless
defiance of all forms of authority — including parental authority
— there seems to persons such as the young man who spoke to
me no reason not to marry as soon as one can find a partner.

In spite of the rebellious mood prevailing in Cherasia, the
officials of the village in 1956, although supposedly elected,
represented the extreme right. The president and secretary
were both members of the "rich" families, possessing compara-
tively broad acres, and both were very emphatic and voluble
in asserting that the only way to deal with Communists was to
use force. Indeed, they said that peace could come to Cherasia
and to Greece only when Russia was blown up by American
atom bombs. How they were elected, I do not know, but I am
certain the election was not a free one. Suspicion and thinly
veiled hostility dominated the relation between the villagers
and their official leaders.

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with the farmers seemed to be genuinely friendly and highly effective in nearly all of the villages I visited. Here again, the American aid mission was entitled to a great deal of credit, for American advisers had made special efforts to reorganize the agricultural extension service on the model of the county agricultural agents in the United States. Many of the Greek agriculturalists had been sent to study in America before receiving their appointments. The public health agencies were another branch of the central administration in which a spirit of service had come to prevail; and there may have been others. In general, it was the older departments of the government, and particularly those concerned with money and taxes, in which the unpleasant but traditional attitudes were most firmly and universally established.

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Another administrative change, and one which produced highly beneficial results in some localities at least, was the reinvigoration of local government. During the war and afterward, until 1951, local government officials were appointed through the Ministry of Interior. In 1951, however, local elections were organized, partly at least in response to repeated urging from Americans. As a result of these elections, village presidents and city mayors, together with advisory councils which assisted them in their administration, became more nearly independent of the central government, and commanded, presumably, more local confidence and support than was likely to be the case when the offices were filled by appointment from above.

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The system did not always work smoothly — witness Cherasia; but my impression of the local officials whom I met in 1956 was on the whole a quite favorable one. Except in Cherasia, the village presidents seemed to have the full confidence of the villagers, and some of them were men of real intelligence and force of character. The president of Old Corinth would be

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The Political Cosmos

However real the changes which had come in the senior ranks of the civil service and in local government, it remained true that plans for economic development and for most local improvements depended ultimately upon cabinet ministers who held office as politicians and not as economic or any other sort of technicians. Cabinet ministers in turn held their high positions at the pleasure of parliamentary deputies, whose votes depended partly on party affiliations, partly on personal ambition, and partly on calculations of the state of opinion among the electorate.

As in other countries where a managerial bureaucracy does not enjoy unchallenged control of the governmental machine, the issues that have most excited the politicians and the public in Greece have not been questions of economic policy and priority. Everyone is in favor of economic development, everyone is against inflation; everyone is in favor of better salaries and pensions, and everyone is against an unbalanced budget. In other words, political debate is not carried on in responsible economic terms, and a government in office always finds it impossible to live up to wild promises its leaders made in campaign speeches.

This sort of irresponsibility is by no means peculiar to Greece. Most politicians in democratic countries, not least in the United States, behave very similarly. What lends the Greek political world its peculiar character is the nature of the political parties and the irredentist tradition of Greek nationalism.

Political parties in Greece (with the exception of the Communist party) formed in the past around the person of a political leader rather than around a program or around local political machines. The system worked effectively only when an unusually gifted individual appeared on the scene, who, by the

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665 magnetism of his personality, was able to control his followers and keep them faithful to him. Eleftherios Venizelos was able to exert such leadership during parts of his career, though even he was not always successful. General Papagos achieved something similar during the first year or so when he held office, before his failing health raised the question of the succession and induced his followers to start jockeying for position.

645 When no single commanding figure was able to dominate the political scene — and this was normal — then political life became a complicated intrigue among ambitious individuals. 662 Every cabinet spent a lot of energy smoothing over personal frictions within its own ranks, and attempting to block schemes, originating from the outside, to disrupt its following in the Chamber of Deputies. In many instances, these preoccupations [433] prevented the cabinet from paying more than casual attention [663] to the really important issues confronting Greece: questions of economic policy, in particular, were often neglected, and awkward decisions, bound to disappoint powerful individuals, were sometimes put off indefinitely.

665 The introduction of the majority system of election in 1952 was conceived, both by its Greek advocates and by the United 666 States Embassy, as a promising remedy for this situation. The 645 effect of the new electoral law was to compel separate personal [177] parties to form election coalitions, since without a coalition no party could hope for a majority if any two others joined forces. But the coalitions did not really destroy the personal parties. Instead, the leaders forming a coalition bargained together to decide how many personal supporters each would be allowed to insert in the coalition's slate of candidates. Questions of the apportionment of cabinet positions and other honorific appointments, to be awarded in the event of victory, were also explored if not always settled in advance. To be sure, Papagos resisted this process and made few promises to the politicians who

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joined his Rally; yet even he, when it came to appointing his cabinet, rewarded the most conspicuous leaders of personal parties who had merged their following into his, by appointing them to ministerial positions. 665
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By 1956, when the commanding personality of General Papagos had been removed from the scene, the actual differences made by the new electoral law were a good deal less marked than might at first appear. Under the old proportional electoral system, the critical negotiations to form a cabinet occurred after the elections; under the new majority system very similar negotiations preceded the elections. In either case, personal followings gathered around a specially conspicuous individual were the basic elements from which cabinets and coalitions were built. Even these building blocks of the political edifice were not very firm; a leader might find, almost overnight, that "his" followers had gone off after someone else who seemed to promise something new or different.

How a man became a party leader was hard to say. Very diverse personalities were active in Greek politics, and some party leaders seemed, at least from the outside, to have little personal impressiveness. Inheritance was a factor in some cases. Sophocles Venizelos, for example, had made his political career on the strength of his father's name, and on little else. Men who lacked such an advantage normally established leadership by oratory in the Chamber of Deputies and through newspaper publicity. 665
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As the game of politics was played, the opposition regularly enjoyed certain advantages. This implied a degree of instability for any government. First of all, in any distribution of ministerial seats and other plums of office, more contenders were bound to be left out than could possibly be included. Efforts to solve this difficulty by enlarging the size of the cabinet have been made from time to time, but always at the cost of effi-

665 ciency, since the more voices that have to reach agreement
645 upon any policy, the more difficult it is to decide anything.
662 Hence the size of Greek cabinets has fluctuated very markedly
since World War II, from over twenty-five to less than fifteen
members. But even when a cabinet was made unwieldy by the
effort to include as many potential supporters as possible, there
were always more disappointed than successful candidates; and
to such discontented persons it was a standing temptation to
break party lines and vote the government down in the Cham-
ber of Deputies on any convenient issue. In the ensuing cabinet
reshuffle they might always hope to do better, having proved
their indispensability to the government by unseating it.

665 Second, the opposition was always in the position of being
666 able to criticize without suggesting specific and practicable al-
ternatives. It was easy to denounce half measures, to attack
policies limited by the availability of money or of physical re-
sources, to criticize the gaps between promises and actual
achievements. The fact that much of what was thus attacked
could not have been done much differently by anyone in power
made little difference, since the opposition was not seriously
concerned with what could or could not be done. Most politi-
cian out of office were inclined to feel that any stick with
which to beat the government, even a rotten one, was better
than silence, so long as the stick hurt.

[663] The irrelevance of much of the language of political debate
to the real, underlying problems of Greek society was easy to
criticize from the outside. Yet a sober technical discussion of
what the government could and should accomplish, of relative
priority among the many desirable projects, and of long-range
policies calculated to relieve overpopulation and underemploy-
ment lacked all political appeal.

471 The difficulty was that Greece faced a formidable political-
457 psychological problem. If large-scale investment on the basis

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party will be able to rise once more from its defeat and become again a disciplined, dominating force in internal Greek politics, will depend at least as much upon the course of international affairs as upon any efforts the Greek Communists may make by themselves. 668

Nevertheless, in 1956 signs were not wanting to show that Communism was still a force to be reckoned with in Greece. In spite of all the police had been able to do, it seemed certain that an illegal underground organization continued to exist, aimed more, perhaps, at collecting intelligence for foreign Communist states than at fomenting revolution in Greece. Greek-language broadcasts from behind the iron curtain continued to reach the country, informing the faithful of the proper attitudes to take on current political questions. The fact has already been mentioned that one Athens newspaper faithfully followed the line laid down by Communist broadcasts; a second appeared most sympathetic, though its editors did not always conform completely to Soviet directives. [204]

On the political stage, a new party was formed in advance of the elections of September 1951 which seemed very like EAM, the Communist-dominated resistance front which had so nearly won control of Greece in 1944. This new party was known by the initials EDA (Enosis Dimikratikon Aristera, or Union of the Democratic Left). Its candidates in 1951 were drawn in considerable measure from among persons who had made a name for themselves during the wartime resistance — many of them being in jail as Communists when the elections were held. 666 • 668

In spite of these circumstances, EDA met with very considerable success. In 1951 it won 180,640 votes, and in the elections of 1952, 152,011. In both cases, the EDA total was close to 10 per cent of all valid ballots, amounting to 10.6 per cent in 1951 and 9.6 per cent in 1952. Inasmuch as EDA participated in an electoral coalition with other opposition parties in the election.

666 of 1958, it is impossible to tell how many votes it may have con-
668 tributed to the opposition's total on that occasion.

In 1951 and 1952, the defeat of the guerrilla army was still fresh and the demoralization of the Greek Communist party must have been serious. It therefore seems safe to assume that the proportion of about 10 per cent which EDA won in these elections represented about the minimal support the Greek Communist party commanded in the country. It is interesting to note, in passing, that a public opinion survey conducted by American and British experts in 1948 found 9.3 per cent of the population willing to declare to the faces of western interrogators an intention of following Communist instructions to abstain from the elections of that year. Very nearly the same proportion, and probably many of the same persons, supported EDA in 1951 and 1952. They must be regarded as "hard core" Communists or sympathizers so strongly attached to the party that nothing is likely to alienate them from Communist leadership.

Given the hardships under which many Greek families live and the history of the past fifteen years, during which on two separate occasions a Communist-led movement seemed on the verge of winning power, this proportion may appear satisfactorily, and even surprisingly, small. Many thousands of young people, after all, dedicated several years of their lives and underwent very real risks and discomforts in the service of a cause offered them by Communist propaganda. Such experiences and loyalties are not easily wiped out, especially when a person who has once been identified as a member of any sort of Communist organization is likely to suffer discrimination in job-hunting and in all contacts with the government forever after.

At the same time, a hard core of about 10 per cent of the voters constitutes a great political asset. It opens the door for

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deals with other parties and coalitions that may badly need just such support to win office. In 1956, the opposition coalition, under the leadership of George Papandreou, yielded to this temptation and accepted the proffered support of EDA. Papandreou was careful to announce, however, that in the event of victory he would not assign any seats in his cabinet to members of EDA; and after the election cooperation between EDA and Papandreou was promptly broken off.

Year in and year out, in the kaleidoscopic shifting of personal reputation that constitutes the warp and woof of Greek politics, it seems very doubtful whether any of the leaders of personal parties can regularly count on as much as 10 per cent of the vote. The apparently solid character of the Communist hard core thus takes on still greater significance. And in times when the discredit of the Communist party is not so recent as it was in 1951 and 1952, it seems at least possible that a fringe of fellow travelers and vague sympathizers — people who wish to protest vigorously against the status quo, and feel, quite correctly, that the Communists represent the most effective challenge to the prevailing social order — may add their votes to those of the hard core, and swell the proportion of the electorate responsive to Communist leadership quite considerably, perhaps to something like 20 per cent of the total.

This means, I believe, that the Communist problem has not been really solved. There still exists an important minority in the country which is prepared to go outside the framework of legality whenever opportunity offers a favorable prospect of success; a minority which on other occasions is ready to participate in the parliamentary process, to join electoral coalitions and to carry on newspaper campaigns against the government, but does all this fundamentally in bad faith, hoping to gain a toehold in the government only to convert it into a stranglehold,

East Foundation, which have recognized this, have been successful in their relations with Greeks and in the introduction of desirable changes. They realized that they had to use not impersonal scientists but people who were predominantly leaders, with scientific knowledge, people who were willing to go and live in the villages, and make the acquaintance of the peasants over coffee in coffee houses. And the villagers fell in with the proposals for new hygienic methods and child care and artificial insemination because they had respect for and faith in the man who made the proposals. And where schemes introduced in the name of self-interest did not succeed, those introduced in the name of the respected leader did. "For your sake" is a common sanction. The continuous presence of the leader is not, however, necessary once the personal loyalty is there. In recent years, foreign experts have made the mistake of operating mainly from Athens, living in hotels catering to foreigners, of moving in foreign circles, and making no personal contact with the Greeks, thus creating difficulties for themselves and raising obstacles to the effectiveness of their missions. Greek families receiving CARE parcels impersonally, make great efforts to attach a person to the name of the sender; they often write very personal letters, trying to send photographs of themselves, "so that you can see us". In Greece there are no political bosses, since a man's vote is too personal, too much bound by personal loyalty, to be swayed by self-interest. On the other hand, we do find demagogues, who by sheer oratory and force of personality can inspire loyalty to themselves, and thereby, to their ideas. If there are irregularities at the polls, they come about not through the selling of one's vote, but through an attempt to vote several times in an impassioned effort to ensure the election of the chosen candidate.

Greek ethical conduct is personal also. A plea in the name of humanity or of kindness is meaningless to most Greeks; and only recently, in Athens, which has been affected by foreign ideas, did a plea in the name of the suffering peasants find true response. An organization called Friends of the Village was formed, and the aid given is by specific persons to specific people or families, in terms of a personal relationship. A peasant woman, writing to such a "Friend" in Athens, accepts the gift with ease and gratitude saying: "You are now my sister, and your family is my family."

Americans, who excel in impersonal kindness, are always surprised to see their human, warm, generous Greek friends remain unmoved and unresponsive in the face of suffering strangers. Greeks, on the other hand, are surprised to see their kind American friends giving according to figures on a piece of paper, according to what they can afford. In giving, Greeks deprive themselves of the very necessities of life, impoverish and even bankrupt themselves; but they recognize their responsibility to give only where personal relations are involved.

This is also true where truthfulness, honesty, loyalty and obedience